



# Examiners' Report

## Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary  
In English Language (8EN0)  
Paper 2: Child Language

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## **General overview**

The number of entries for this paper has decreased with 200 candidates sitting the qualification this year. Similarly to previous years, the quality of responses and numbers of those placed in levels 4 and 5 have declined. This year, however, the overarching factor that prevented higher level placement was quality of analysis, likely an influence of the recent impact of the pandemic on candidates' educational practice. There was a significant amount of knowledge demonstrated throughout both questions across all levels but the ability to analyse was limited.

The demand of the paper remains in-line with previous series. It was no easier or more difficult than previous papers.

Candidates who scored higher in the marking grids were able to showcase their knowledge effectively, offering explanations linked to context. These responses demonstrated consistency in their discussions but overall, there was a limited number of responses that showed discrimination, therefore preventing many candidates achieving level 5. Question 1 required candidates to produce a script for a talk aimed at year 12 students who were preparing for their examinations. The purpose being to engage students, like themselves, and explain how to analyse a child's written language development. Question 2 asked candidates to analyse how three children of similar ages used their language to interact with each other.

## **Question 1**

This question poses a challenge in that it requires candidates to analyse a child's writing whilst shaping it in a more creative way. The expectation is that candidates will explore the development of the child's writing explaining how it marries against trends and expectations at their stage of development, whilst situating the writing in its context and explaining how this has determined the language adopted by the child. The approach expected is similar to that which is expected in 9EN0\_02 but with the added element of AO5.

The integrated approach produced variable standards across the marking levels, with a stronger application of AO5 demonstrated. Candidates across all levels were able to shape their response into a script for a talk, utilising signposting, aspects of humour, appropriate registers etc. to engage their intended audience. Some candidates adopted an overly informal register, which led to a more general and broad understanding of the genre.

There was a noticeable trend in the lower levels this year of simply outlining relevant AO2 concepts and issues. Whilst this illustrated depth of knowledge, the issues and concepts were often descriptive and not applied to language features used in the child's writing. The language features commented upon at the lower levels continues to revolve around aspects of literacy i.e. organisation, ascenders and descenders. These features can be noted as part of a more detailed analysis but should not be the main elements of focus. There are far more interesting features to explore and so it is frustrating to see candidates hanging their entire response on simplistic, visual aspects of language development. If presented with a child who is in the very early stages of their writing journey (emergent literacy) these features would be wholly appropriate to comment on but when the data provided contains longer sentences, developed genre skills etc. it is expected that candidates would comment on these and how they differ from their spoken development.

This was demonstrated in responses awarded higher levels. Here, candidates explored how the genre of the child's writing influenced her language choices. They commented on the structure of sentences, verb choices, spelling etc. but did so with the understanding that these features would be more developed and advanced in spoken language. Such comments were then underpinned by Department for Education EYFS and Key Stage 1 requirements. There was a noticeable move away from simply bolting on common theorists including Kroll and Barclay and a move towards application of Tomasello's usage-based theory, creative versus rule-based approaches to early literacy. Kroll and Barclay did dominate a number of responses but there were attempts to challenge rather than simply accept their ideas.

## **Question 2**

This question, unlike previous years, illustrated the effects of limited exam technique, in that many candidates found it challenging to explain and analyse the children's language use. As a result, the spread of marks usually found in this question tended to clump around levels 2 and 3. Few candidates were able to move beyond these levels predominantly due to a lack of contextual analysis.

The approach required for this question is identical to that expected in 9EN0\_02. Candidates should read through the transcript to understand the context of the interaction. This means doing more than simply identifying the mode (spoken), field (toys), function (interactional) and audience (each other). Whilst these are important to the foundations of the response, the children are doing more than simply talking about their toys. The understanding of what they use their language to achieve is key to accessing the higher levels in the marking grids. In this transcript, the children were sharing, choosing toys based on preferences, exploring new toys and demonstrating an understanding of fairness and empathy. It is this context that allows for pertinent analysis of the children's language use and how they construct meaning in their interactions. The analysis of children's language should centre around their intentions and the development of their interactions, rather than a detailed overview of their development, which is what was noted in the lower levels.

Candidate responses in levels 1 and 2 tended to describe the data, selecting one or two isolated examples that allowed them to demonstrate knowledge. This was particularly true of comments on phonology. Candidates, in this area, showed effective understanding and in some cases, for this aspect only were producing level 4 quality analysis. However, when situated with the remainder of the responses, it was difficult to place the responses higher than level 2 or mid level 3. The broad approach to the transcript was general and broad with few explanations offered around how and why children used specific features.

Candidate responses that were awarded levels 3 to 5, of which there were few placed in the higher levels, offered some insightful discussions and analysis around Amelia's use of language and how aspects of this illustrated ideas such as imitation or social interaction. There were a range of comments on Piaget's cognitive development theory, which enabled candidates to differentiate the ways in which the children interacted with each other. Responses at these levels included analyses of discourse, sentence functions/moods, phonology, morphology etc. but situated such comments in context.

